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ESSAY

ON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF

MANNERS AND EDUCATION

AMONG THE

LOWER CLASS

OF THE

PEOPLE OF IRELAND,

AND THE

MEANS OF IMPROVING THEM.

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APR

INTRODUCTION.

THE following hints were ſuggeſted in a converſation on the poſſibility of reſcuing our peaſantry from the ſtate of barbarous ignorance in which they are plunged. They are founded on this maxim which all experience, eſpecially late experience, confirms, "whatever is beſt adminiſtered, is beſt"—a maxim equally applicable to all human inſtitutions. To infuſe therefore a new ſpirit, is of more conſequence than to deviſe new forms; the contrary has been the practice of all modern reformiſts, who run after ingenious novelties in detail, inſtead of endeavouring to revive the languid ſpirit of antient eſtabliſhments. I thought I ſaw an inſtance wherein a new impulſe had been given to the public mind, and I thought I diſcovered the principle whereon it proceeded. I ſaw that we poſſeſſed eſtabliſhments venerable from their dignity, and powerful were their dormant vigour exerted. I wiſhed to rouſe this exertion, and pointed to a beaten track in which ſimilar exertions had already proved ſucceſsful. If the thought ſtrikes other minds as it does mine, I would fondly indulge the hope, that a new ſcene may open to us. My warmeſt wiſh, my higheſt ambition, is, that I may yet act as the humbleſt inſtrument in effectuating a plan which may be framed for ſuch a purpoſe: nor would I want for fellow-labourers—already have many expreſſed to me ſo firm a conviction of the

neceſſity of ſome amendment, that they would willingly become drudges for effectuating ſuch an object. Could I impreſs on the mind of any one individual this important truth, that the private man, who contributes by his example and exertions to improve the morals of his little circle, is a greater benefactor to mankind, a more ſalutary reformiſt, than the moſt eloquent or profound ſtateſman who would encreaſe the power or the wealth of a people, without correcting their vices. That liberty to an ignorant or depraved people, is but a bubble or ſnare; but that virtue is the pearl of great price, for which we may wiſely give up all that we have. Could I in a ſingle inſtance impreſs this truth, I ſhould not repent having expoſed this feeble Eſſay to the world, with all its imperfections on its head.

It is obvious that ſome principles of eſſential importance, are only hinted at in this Eſſay, becauſe they are better ſubjects of diſcuſſion for the committee, as they will by that time be furniſhed with facts.

ESSAY

ESSAY, &c.

HAPPILY the two great prejudices which have hitherto oppoſed every plan of general improvement are now almoſt wholly exploded. On the imporportant ſubject of education parliament has ſanctioned and encouraged public diſcuſſion, and by the appointment of a committee, has acknowledged the neceſſity of deviſing and adopting ſome means for diffuſing knowledge and religion amongſt our people.

Thus has it reproved that firſt great prejudice, which ſhrunk with involuntary and inſtinctive dread from every thought of alteration, as the maſk for revolution and ſubverſion, and which viewed the reformiſt, in any branch of the ſocial ſyſtem, as a being highly miſchievous, if not malignant. This it has wiſely corrected and ſoftened down into a ſalutary caution, which, while it rejects the boaſted noſtrum of the empiric, who inhumanly ſports with the ſocial frame, (and though groſsly ignorant of its interior mechaniſm, would raſhly hazard his experiments even on its vitals) yet will at the ſame time liſten with candour and good will to the honeſt phyſician, who, ſenſible of this our ignorance, would not touch the remoteſt fibre leſt it reach the heart, and preſcribes only a change of regimen, whoſe operation and efficacy he clearly points out, by unfolding the nature of our diſeaſe. Parliament has thus

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alſo caſt off another prejudice, that education may be dangerous in the preſent temper and circumſtances of mankind—an idea once very prevalent, though now, I believe, very generally diſclaimed. Strange! that ſo abſurd a poſition ſhould ever have been received, eſpecially in this nation. What! are the people of Ireland too much enlightened? Have all the horrors and crimes we have witneſſed proceeded from their learning? No—this can never be aſſerted; every one admits that we are *now* ignorant. Do we not appear alſo as the moſt diſturbed and unhappy amongſt the nations? If then our monſtrous vices have kept pace with our brutal ignorance, is it not a ſtrong preſumption, is it not a moral demonſtration, that they are connected? This connection has, indeed, of late been clearly laid open—it is almoſt become a truiſm, and is lamentably illuſtrated by the hiſtory of our diſaſters; we learn it from the boaſtings of our enemies, and the confeſſions of our traitors. In the developement of their plots, it appears that they grounded their hopes of ſucceſs on the general ignorance, on the ſemi barbarous ſtate of the people, which, as they add, "is of all others the beſt adapted for making war." (See Report of Secret Committee.) It was eaſy to deviſe the mode whereby this ignorance could be practiſed on with moſt ſecurity and advantage; we find that rebellion was planted and cheriſhed by means of active, artful emiſſaries diſperſed throughout the land, who worked in diſguiſe, and ſpread their doctrines in darkneſs and ſecreſy. As their aſſiſtant in every village, ſome petty demagogue, whoſe pride in his ſuperior literature was the cauſe of his diſaffection, which muſt ſink as letters grew more common, became the officious miniſter of treaſon, and vented his lies and calumnies where he might do it without danger or contradiction, to an illiterate circle, who looked up with wonder and implicit belief to the man who could read, and

through

through this polluted channel derived all their information and principles. It is certain that you were unable to cope with ſuch adverſaries, and the cauſe is obvious—you would not, you could not, imitate their baſe and ſecret arts; theſe were equally unbecoming and impracticable to you: how then were you to undeceive the people? Was it by publiſhing the fact, in this way inculcating truth and loyalty? It could not reach them, for they could not read. Did you even wiſh to convince and conciliate them in converſation, they might often as well be deaf, for they did not know your language. Thus was every avenue to their hearts and underſtandings cloſed againſt you. You ſee the abſurdity of this policy, which, though it could not prevent the noxious few from retaining their ſight, thought it for their intereſts that the many ſhould be blind—of courſe the few who poſſeſſed ſuperior powers to miſlead, ſoon perſuaded the many, that you were leading them a rough and dangerous road for your own intereſts, and promiſed to conduct them through a ſmooth and pleaſant. Your part was obvious—you ſhould have opened their eyes, and let them ſee the broad and level way in which they walk, and the thorny paths and frightful pitfalls by which theſe falſe guides would lead them. From all this it follows then, that education is your only reſource; 'tis this alone can open to you the channels of inſtruction, and this *will* enable you to meet the enemy, who has ſecretly got poſſeſſion, not only on equal terms, but with ſuperior advantage.

On a ſubject then which appears ſo eſſential to our ſecurity, the humbleſt may intrude, if there be the leaſt poſſibility of his becoming uſeful. Let this be my apology for theſe few crude hints, which I can only hope may hereafter be matured into ſomething more valuable.

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I cannot perceive in the ſyſtems at preſent propoſed, any fundamental difference, any more efficacious and vigorous principle, than ſupported thoſe which had already been proved altogether inſufficient. The plans indeed appear admirable, but the mainſpring is wanting whereby the whole machinery is to be ſet in motion, or at leaſt whereby its operation could be long continued. To inſtance in the laſt plan propoſed to the Houſe of Commons, by the chairman of the committee. He requires that ſchoolmaſters be eſtabliſhed in each pariſh, with competent ſalaries; that they ſhall be appointed by the clergyman and magiſtrate, and remain ſubject to their viſitation and controul. But does not the great difficulty yet remain; how are you to rouſe and encourage the magiſtrate and clergyman to ſuch active and impartial enquiry into the character of the maſter, and ſtill more, to ſuch anxious inſpection of his conduct,—ſuch conſtant and laborious attendance on the ſchool, as would promiſe greater fruits than have hitherto been produced by the many abuſed or decayed inſtitutions, which already exiſt throughout this kingdom? Mr. Edgworth felt, no doubt, the neceſſity of this ſuperintendance: he muſt know, indeed, that without it all public inſtitutions become either nugatory or dangerous; but what expedient has he deviſed for enforcing it? His act of parliament does no more than acquaint the magiſtrate what is his duty. Is that ſufficient to make him practiſe it? No! ſtatutes cannot inſpire zeal, patriotiſm and religion. Like the tortoiſe, which was to ſupport the elephant, which was to ſupport the world—unfortunately they want ſupport themſelves.

We muſt ſearch therefore for ſome original and powerful principle of human nature, which, like gravity in the material world, ſhall pervade and animate the inert and ſelfiſh mind of man, force it to

revolve regularly and perpetually in the orbit of duty, and overcome the inceſſant reſiſtance of indolence and intereſt.

It ſtrikes my mind that this univerſal and all-ſufficient principle, is public opinion. I will briefly unfold its power, and then as briefly point out in what mode it may be applied to ſupport a ſyſtem of public education.

The profound and judicious Locke aſſerts its paramount authority. He ſays, that public opinion is the moſt powerful of all laws—and the experience of all ages has confirmed the obſervation. Every ſchool-boy at a glance, diſcovers that this was the mainſpring of Lycurgus's ſyſtem. He did not levy armies, or appeal to the ſenates to ſanction his policy and ſupport his eſtabliſhments; he applied himſelf to convince and conciliate the principal men of his city, all who were diſtinguiſhed by rank, by age, by ſtation; theſe he perſuaded to embody themſelves as a domeſtic tribunal—to inſpect and regulate the ſyſtem of public education—to reform public morals—to foſter virtue by the ſunſhine of their favour—to chaſe vice with the laſh of their diſpleaſure. We all know the conſequences; cheriſhed by the genial beams of this ſuperintending power, all his inſtitutions flouriſhed; ſchools, which with us we have ſo often ſeen the ſeminaries of diſorder and ignorance, became with him the nurſeries of every virtue, public and private. Sumptuary laws, *in other ſtates* ſo eaſily evaded, ſo frequently tranſgreſſed, were by his nation obſerved with religious exactneſs. His ſyſtem laſted through ages, and ſtill claims the admiration of mankind; for he knew the full force of the weapon he had thus acquired, and he had ſtrength to wield it. His great mind expanded with his means, and thus armed, he boldly attacked the moſt potent and inveterate paſſions and prejudices of the human heart, and bound them in ſubjection to his laws. The metamorphoſes

he accompliſhed ſeemed indeed almoſt magical ; it is not however to recommend them to our imitation that I here mention them. Thanks to the ſpirit of chriſtianity this fierce unſocial ſyſtem is not only impracticable, but criminal; but if we can diſcover the ſecret agent by which this was effected, we may, perhaps, be able to make it uſeful, and mould it to our purer purpoſes. (When Franklin pryed into the ſecrets of the thunder, his aim was not to ſcorch and ſcourge mankind, but to protect the cottage, or relieve the paralytic.)

You, perhaps, already catch the idea that now poſſeſſes my mind. It is this—that we have already within our reach ſuch a power, as that by which theſe wonders were effected. A tribunal veſted with authority exactly ſimilar in kind, though inferior in degree; that in this Aſſociation for diſcountenancing Vice, and promoting the Practice of Virtue and Religion, we have here embodied a very large proportion of the rank, the wealth, the talent, and the virtue of the nation—of all that is eſtimable in the eyes of mankind, or intrinſically valuable in human character—aſſembled and leagued together in holy convocation, for the nobleſt of human purpoſes, for the diffuſion of happineſs, by the eſtabliſhment of order and civilization, by the amelioration of the morals and habits of the people. And why ſhould we doubt, that in theſe times ſuch a power can be applied with effect to the accompliſhment of ſuch purpoſes. Are you inclined to object that ancient example affords but unſubſtantial grounds to determine the judgment, or regulate the conduct of the preſent age? I will admit it, and intreat you to turn your attention to a very recent inſtance, whoſe ſignal ſucceſs, in affecting the minds of a whole people, and infuſing a new ſpirit on an important ſubject, firſt ſuggeſted to my mind the poſſibility of ſomething ſimilar being effected through the medium of the Aſſociation. The in-

ſtance I allude to is, that of the agricultural board in England. I will briefly ſtate their origin, to ſhew that they acted on the principle I have here attempted to unfold, and that they ſucceeded under circumſtances ſo ſimilar to ours, as to hold forth the utmoſt encouragement to ſimilar efforts.

Some gentlemen of talents, wealth and public ſpirit, whoſe mind were deeply impreſſed with the conviction, that agriculture was one of the chief ſources of national wealth and virtue, aſſociated for the purpoſe of conſultation, and co-operation in ſome ſcheme for encouraging their favourite art, and inſpiring their countrymen with a taſte and knowledge of the ſubject.

Upon the firſt ſuggeſtion of theſe noble improvements, would not the ſame objections and difficulties ariſe which will now probably preſent themſelves to us; would not indolence and ſelfiſhneſs endeavour to damp the ardour of benevolence, by conjuring up innumerable obſtacles, or ſtamping the whole project as viſionary; would not the ſneer of faſhionable envy ſtrive to diſpirit them,—which loves to depreciate what it cannot emulate, and hates the light of that virtue which ſerves to deepen the ſhade of its inſignificance. How many would profeſs equal ardour, but lament over the temper of the times, as wholly adverſe to ſuch ſchemes, while men's minds were troubled and diſtracted with higher cares; that however they might admire ſuch views, they feared to indulge in them, as they could only expect ridicule from many, and aſſiſtance from none. No doubt theſe, and ſuch like obſervations, were frequently and forcible ſtated. But their zeal was not ſo lukewarm as to be chilled by ſuch dull maxims, ſuch ſelfiſh conſiderations; with prudence equal to their virtue, they ſaw through the thin miſts of theſe pretences, which they knew the firſt dawn of ſucceſs would have power to diſſipate, and they ſaw at the ſame time the ſpring whence ſucceſs muſt ariſe. They marked the

genius of the age, and concluded that a large majority would engage eagerly in the liſts, if once the public eye were fixed on them, and its applauſe awaited to reward their exertions. To effect this, all that was neceſſary, they knew, was to combine the ſcattered rays of rank, and talent, and congenial ſentiment, and raiſe the collected flame to public view. They did ſo; the agricultural board was placed as it were on an eminence; it was conſecrated with ſome pomp and ceremony, and the high patronage of parliament was called in to increaſe the luſtre which it already derived from the dignity of its members. We have ſeen its effects: we have ſeen it (I appeal to every man's experience) diffuſing almoſt inſtantaneouſly a new ſpirit and energy through every claſs, and to the remoteſt corners of the kingdom. We have ſeen the noble and the peaſant preſſing forward with equal ardour, to communicate all they knew, and all they had done, and rouſed to freſh and uncommon exertions to entitle them to have their names recorded, as worthy correſpondents of this celebrated ſociety. Look into their reports, and you will find ample proof of this.

I aſk then, may not this Aſſociation hope for equal ſucceſs were they to adopt the ſame meaſures to promote the important object of education. Does it not poſſeſs ſuperior dignity? How much more noble and beneficent too is its object; not merely to make two blades of graſs grow where one grew before, but to root out ignorance, depravity and wretchedneſs, and plant the ſeeds of knowledge, of religion, and happineſs—to convert a barren and miſerable waſte into a ſmiling garden. Does not the nation too already approve its object, encourage and implore its exertions, conſidering its ſucceſs as eſſential to their preſervation? Thus ſupported, thus encouraged, to ſhrink from the glorious enterpriſe, is to ſacrifice your country for the indulgence of a little eaſe. Nor

are theſe all—yet higher advantages belong to you. You are maſters of the moſt ſimple and moſt powerful machinery that ever worked upon the human mind—I mean in the great body of the clergy. What an admirable inſtrument is here ready formed to your hand, for effecting any plans you may deviſe; ſo compact and connected, yet at the ſame time ſo extenſive, reaching to the remoteſt and loweſt of the people. But how is this vaſt and admirable frame to be ſet at work, and how conducted? Herein lies your peculiar advantage. You have within yourſelves almoſt all the dignitaries of the church, and in them you poſſeſs the mainſpring, which can in a moment ſet the whole in motion.

When we reflect how admirably calculated chriſtianity is, both in its civil and religious ſyſtem, to affect the human mind, we may reaſonably expect that the love of public morals, under ſuch a ſanction, ſhould be elevated high above that of the poor heathen. How awful and affecting a circumſtance is a revelation from the Creator of the univerſe. Can this have leſs power in our hands than the clumſy weapons of enthuſiaſtic ſentiment, or popular ſuperſtition, under the management of an ancient legiſlator? Shall the dread ſanctions of eternity, denounced by the Almighty himſelf, make leſs impreſſion on mankind, than the puny inflictions of human juſtice. We muſt feel therefore our vaſt advantages, and how heavy muſt be our condemnation, if we ſuffer this divine inſtrument to be idle in our hands. I haſten then to point out the ſpecific mode in which theſe two principles I have here endeavoured to ſtate, may be brought to bear in ſupport of a plan of general education.

It will be manifeſt that the following ſketch, far from being intended as a perfect plan, is only deſigned to call the attention of the Aſſociation to the ſubject; their power once exerted, will acquire

quire new lights, will reſolve all doubts, and beat down all obſtacles. I propoſe to call it forth in the following manner:—

Let a committee be formed from the Aſſociation; the greater the zeal, the talents, the dignity of its members (and how many are there amongſt us eminently poſſeſſed of all theſe qualifications) the greater will be their influence and efficacy; but chiefly the prelates of our church muſt be invited, muſt be ſupplicated, to form a part of it, as it is from their power and influence over the clergy, that the moſt important fruits are to be expected. Let the committee in its firſt ſteps imitate the prudent and ſucceſsful conduct of the agricultural board, and acquire a thorough knowledge of the preſent ſtate of education in this kingdom; this perfect acquaintance with the miſchief is the moſt effectual ſtep to reformation. This might, I think, be eaſily effected, in the following manner: Let a circular letter, ſigned by all the members of the committee, be addreſſed to the clergy throughout the kingdom, and communicated to them through their reſpective biſhops, ſtating fully and forcibly the general plan and objects of the Aſſociation, and calling on them earneſtly, but reſpectfully, to give their aſſiſtance towards effectuating theſe deſigns, the ſucceſs of which principally depended on their zealous co-operation; they are therefore intreated to direct their thoughts, and uſe their utmoſt activity, in gaining full information on the following points. The number of ſchools for the education of the lower claſſes that are in the pariſh—what endowments that are neglected or decayed—what number of ſcholars have attended in each during the laſt three years—the name of the ſchool-maſter—the price of tuition—the books generally taught there, eſpecially as to their moral or immoral tendency—the hours of attendance, and what time is devoted to religious inſtruction,

tion, with obſervations on the progreſs of the children in theſe ſtudies, and the improvements which might be made in theſe important branches—what plans have been adopted within their knowledge, or what expedients ſuggeſt themſelves for employing the * children in works of active induſtry, and what methods have been purſued, with ſucceſs, for giving habits of honeſty, cleanlineſs, obedience. They will alſo be requeſted to give as accurate an account as poſſible of the number of children fit for ſchool in the pariſh, and a rough calculation of the number of pariſhioners who are able to pay for their children's ſchooling. When they have thus acquainted you with the actual ſtate of education in their diſtrict, the committee will requeſt to be favoured with their ſentiments on the cauſes which impede the progreſs of education, and on the means they would recommend for diminiſhing the influence of theſe cauſes, and of forming new ſchools, or encreaſing attendance on the old; in order to this, they will ſtate what they know to be the real motives, or pretended excuſes, under which their parents withhold their children from ſchool, and whether any arguments or meaſures have been found effectual to remove theſe objections.

Another very important branch of information to be collected from active and vigilent enquiry, is, what gentlemen in the neighbourhood, or any part of their families, have hitherto paid any attention to education, or would be likely to co-operate with the deſigns of the Aſſociation, and pledge themſelves to aſſiſt, by giving their due portion of labor in ſuperintendence—and alſo from whom the committee would probably receive the beſt information on theſe ſubjects—whether there are in the pariſh any agricul-

* The principal difficulty lies in finding works of induſtry for the male children.

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tural, or other ſocieties, or any body or ſect of men who ſeem actuated by a ſpirit that might be applied with effect, in furthering the purpoſes of education * —whether any funds are raiſed in the pariſh for theſe objects, and how theſe, or any public funds, might be beſt applied for the eſtabliſhment and encouragement of ſchools. In ſhort, whatever appears to them as of importance towards promoting the views of the committee, as here unfolded. When his report is prepared, it ſhould be ſent to the biſhop of the dioceſe, to be by him tranſmitted to the Aſſociation.

From the number of theſe reports it will be neceſſary to diſtribute them amongſt different committees, or individuals, to peruſe and arrange, claſſing them under their proper heads, with references to ſuch reports, as give moſt ſatisfactory information on each, and then lay them before the principal committee, who muſt always carry on the correſpondence, as it is their influence and authority that is to give ſpirit and efficacy to the whole. From theſe reports will be learned, in the firſt place, what is the actual ſtate of education in this kingdom, from whence it can be eſtimated what efforts will be neceſſary, and towards what objects they ſhould be principally directed; from them too will be collected (what has been hitherto a great deſideratum, and what no individual can have influence enough to procure) which is a detail of thoſe regulations which have been found practically uſeful—and thus, like the agricultural board, you will adopt no improvement which has not been fully confirmed by experience. The next great buſineſs of the committee will be, from this

* This has been practiſed with great judgment, and the happieſt effects, by Dr. O'Connor of Caſtleknock, who, in junction with Mr. Pelham, formed an agricultural ſociety, which he afterwards uſed to promote in other branches, the improvement and inſtruction of the poor.

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maſs of materials, to form a ſyſtem cheap, ſimple, and practicable;—and here it ſhould be ſtrongly recommended, that their firſt alterations be as ſimple, as gradual, and as much adapted to old habits as poſſible. Novelties are always difficult to introduce, and ſtill more difficult to practice.—Man muſt be broken in by degrees; therefore, whenever they are not pernicious, ſtick to old cuſtoms, old places, and perſons. It is alſo better to begin always within the extent of your powers; for the conſciouſneſs of progreſs is delightful, and is neceſſary to feed that zeal, which however lively at the commencement of any new career, inevitably languiſhes in its advancement.

But whatever ſyſtem may be adopted, let it immediately be communicated to the clergy, who ſhall be requeſted to wait on every ſchool-maſter with a copy of the plan, and preſent him likewiſe with a letter from the Aſſociation, exhorting him to the adoption of it, and promiſing premiums to thoſe who, with moſt ſpeed and ability, ſhould put it in execution, and could ſhew the greateſt number of ſcholars; informing him too, theſe premiums are to be diſtributed, after inſpection and examination, by the clergyman and the other viſitors, who muſt report the reſult of ſuch examination every month to the committee. He may alſo be invited to communicate his obſervations on the practicability of this or any other ſyſtem; and indeed, whenever the ſchoolmaſter is known to the committee, I think it would be judicious to apply to him in the firſt inſtance, as likely to give the moſt ſatisfactory information. It will here be objected, that no mention is made of eſtabliſhing free ſchools for gratuitous inſtruction to the poor: I muſt confeſs that the impreſſion on my mind is, that it ſhould never be adopted as a *general* principle that education ſhould be given gratis Where it is thus dealt out as charity to all, the pride of our common peo-

ple, ſometimes ſo capricious, revolts againſt this eleemoſynary tuition. Why elſe is it, that in many pariſh ſchools they cannot get a ſcholar? Indeed I have frequently known many poor creatures take from their pittance, to pay an ignorant ſchoolmaſter, when they might have had much better inſtruction at a free ſchool contiguous; and they have taken praiſe to themſelves for this their proper ſpirit. In truth, the expence of tuition is ſo ſmall, that in general it cannot be want of money, but of inclination, that is the hindrance to education. In theſe free ſchools too, where the maſter receives a fixed ſalary, he often becomes either negligent or intolerably ſevere, which equally excite diſguſt, and afford an excuſe to the parent. It appears to me, therefore, as a better ſyſtem, that no ſalaries ſhould be given to the ſchoolmaſter, but that parliament ſhould entruſt the money to the diſpoſal of the committee, to be diſtributed in large premiums, to whoever had the greateſt number of well inſtructed ſcholars; and to provide for caſes, where the parent is really unable to pay the ordinary price of tuition, let the clergyman, who ſhall report to the committee the number of his pariſhioners thus diſabled, be empowered to defray the expence. You thus give the tutor an immediate and a very lively intereſt, not only in the improvement, but in the number of his pupils, and of courſe ſtimulate him to uſe every art that can prevail with the parent, to ſend his children to him; and if his exertions, together with the improved ſtate of education, be ſtill ineffectual, I think we might have recourſe to a ſtronger inducement, which has ſeldom been found to fail—which is to make the premiums (which ſhould be given particularly for moral improvement) valuable to the parents. Suppoſe a ſmall part of them were to be given to the children, in ſome play thing, and the larger part applied in purchaſing turf, or a blanket, or ſomething of that nature, adapted to

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the particular wants of the parents, as they ſhall themſelves decide; for it is from the parent that all our difficulties have ariſen hitherto; to him all our addreſs ſhould be directed. Strange to ſay, that he is the great barrier to his children's improvement. Once give him a preſent intereſt in their progreſs, and they will ſoon learn, without any rewards, all that we wiſh to teach. In the wiſe policy of Peru, the father was always puniſhed when the ſon tranſgreſſed. Let us adopt the principle, and reward the parent when the child does well.

Another beneficial effect of this ſyſtem of premiums will be produced on the maſter, who, in theſe inferior ſchools, has hitherto been a very miſchievous member of ſociety, conſtantly the friend of innovation and rebellion, and tainting the minds of the youth with his poiſonous principles. Theſe rewards, beſtowed on his uſeful and loyal exertions, will attach him more to the government, than a ſalary which was fixed and unalterable. And at all events you get a moſt ſalutary controul over him, by the vigilant inſpection of your viſitors, which will keep him ſteady if already attached, or will guard againſt his machinations if ſtill knaviſh and diſloyal. This alone would juſtify and repay the exertions of the ſociety in their interference, by enabling them to put down the monſtrous practices* which (as has been ſtated in the Houſe of Commons) prevail in many of the ſchools in this kingdom.

As I have already ſtated one of the principal advantages of the meaſures here recommended, is, that it will open ſuch ſources of ſolid and uſeful information as will enable the committee to form a plan, founded on experience, and adapted to the peculiarities of temper, habit, and ſituation, of our people.

* Extract from Mr. Edgeworth's ſpeech on the abuſes of ſchools.

It is obvious, therefore, I do not yet pledge the Aſſociation to any ſpecific plan: yet I will venture to throw out one or two general obſervations, on what appears to me ſpeedily and eaſily practicable. The two moſt important habits to the comfort and induſtry of a people, are thoſe of cleanlineſs and early riſing. Might not a much earlier hour than is now uſual be fixed in all the ſchools for attendance, and the habit thus early acquired might be continued through life, in which, as far as my experience reaches, the Iriſh peaſant by no means keeps pace with the Engliſh. One excellent expedient for effecting this, and at the ſame time anſwering a much higher purpoſe, would be to provide the children with their breakfaſt at ſchool. It would remove what is now an unanſwerable objection to early attendance, at leaſt where the children live at any diſtance, and hold out an irreſiſtible temptation to the poor parents to ſend them when ſure of a comfortable meal. It is practiſed with the happieſt effects at a charity ſchool at Monckſtown, and the example, I am informed, has ſpread through the neighbouring ſchools. All the regulations of this ſchool deſerve the attention of the committee. On the other head I am more poſitive, that the children ſhould be called up by claſſes, when they come to ſchool, and again when they leave it, and be obliged to waſh their hands and faces in the preſence of the maſter. This would contribute greatly to their preſent health, and might in time do away the national reproach. One delightful inſtance of the advantage of this practice I muſt mention;—In the charter-ſchool at Briſtol, which was founded in the year 1741, and has ever ſince contained 100 boys, it appears by the records of the ſchool, which are accurately kept by the truſtees of the charity, that only eleven boys have died in the whole of that time. The boys are obliged to waſh themſelves four

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times a day; and the maſter told me, that his whole art in keeping them healthy and regular conſiſted in this, that whenever out of ſchool, they were employed in works of cleanlineſs, in waſhing their rooms, their clothes, making their beds, and other works. All their learning conſiſts in writing, counting, and reading the bible; yet it is well known, that many of the moſt eminent merchants of Briſtol came from that ſchool; and at preſent it is the ſtrongeſt recommendation to a clerk, that he was educated there.—On the important ſubject of employing the children in labour, as the beſt diſcipline towards forming induſtrious habits, I am not yet qualified to ſpeak. I am ſure, however, it is an eſſential branch of every plan of popular education; and therefore I am confident, that the committee will direct their attention to it particularly. Much will depend upon the ſpirit which will be evinced on the propoſal of this ſyſtem, by the Aſſociation, as it will certainly require more exertion and expenſive preparation, to employ the children in labour, than merely giving them tuition. Its ſucceſs, however, in ſome inſtances in this kingdom, and many in England, encourage us to hope, that ſome general plan may be ſet on foot for the purpoſe.

As to ſtudies,—the only alteration that would perhaps be adviſeable at firſt, would be to require, that every Saturday be devoted to learn a catechiſm, in which the moral precepts of Chriſtianity ſhould be detailed, and ſupported, and illuſtrated, by ſhort narratives from the bible, cautiouſly avoiding all doctrinal points that might offend their prejudices. It is unneceſſary to give inſtances. If the principal facts of the Old and New Teſtaments were thus worked up, applied aptly and clearly, it would, in the moſt agreeable manner, convey a knowledge of all that is neceſſary for them in the ſcriptures, from

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which they are now ſhut out, by being prohibited from reading the ſacred book. It would make their knowledge alſo truly uſeful, by teaching them to apply it in a moral and practical view; and thoſe who afterwards read the bible would do it with a new zeſt, and in the mean while would be enabled to underſtand the ſcriptural alluſions and examples, which give ſuch beauty and force to a ſermon. The maxims and proverbs which Franklin has collected, in his admirable tract of Poor Richard, would, if imprinted on the young mind, afford encouragements and ſtimulatives to induſtry and honeſty.

An idea lately occurred to me, which, however, I propoſe with much heſitation;—it is this, that a political or legal catechiſm might be framed, on the ſame plan with the religious one, in which the firſt principles of ſocial order, of law and government, as alſo the duty of allegiance, the obligation of oaths, might be made plain to their underſtandings, when illuſtrated by examples drawn from ſacred hiſtory. In truth, it is a miſerable reflection, that the peaſant of this iſland is ſo profoundly ignorant, that he cannot yet diſcern the advantages of government, nor the neceſſity for diſtinction in ranks; that he cannot anſwer the groſs ſophiſtry of the knave, who tells him that all mankind are equal, and therefore at all times entitled to equality of rank and power. I think it might be brought home more forcibly to his underſtanding and his feelings than has yet been done; that if the rich man be not protected, neither can the poor; that none would labour, if the fruits of that labour be not ſecured to them and to their children—and thus that all would ſtarve. The incomparable Paley has ſome very happy illuſtrations of theſe truths in his moral philoſophy, in the 6th book, but not altogether ſo popular as would be neceſſary here; and Miſs Moore's Tracts and Ballads, eſpecially

eſpecially ſome of the Dialogues, approach very near the perfection of what I propoſe. I know men in this Aſſociation who are able and willing to draw up ſuch tracts.

Would it not be waſte of time to dwell on the advantages of thus pre-occupying the young mind with loyal, prudential, and religious maxims; which, when early implanted on the tender and tenacious memory, grow at laſt into the heart? They are afterwards, through life, recollected and repeated with that tenderneſs and veneration, aſſociated with all juvenile impreſſions, and recur not only with more frequency than our latter ideas, but with more authority; for (as their origin is too remote to be traced) they are regarded as the dictates of nature and conſcience. Let us examine our own minds, and they will bear witneſs to this truth. We will find that our pureſt principles, our moſt refined ſentiments, are but the traces left there by leſſons, which at the time we diſliked, or perhaps did not underſtand.

But the moſt formidable obſtacle to theſe ſtudies, and to theſe ſchemes, yet remains:—our melancholy religious differences. By this ſyſtem, however, the committee will be likely, if ever, to gain intelligence of any expedient which ſome mind, more fortunate or judicious than the reſt, may have deviſed, to engage the co-operation of the Catholic miniſters.

Never, indeed, will I renounce the hopes that the miniſters of God will yet ceaſe to oppoſe the progreſs of his goſpel, and the improvement of his creatures. It may be uſeful, though, I believe, in very few caſes neceſſary, that the Aſſociation ſhould exhort every clergyman in our church, to conciliate, as much as poſſible, their Catholic brethren, and further, to ſanction and encourage, as much as poſſible, ſuch a line of conduct. Let it be a part of the ſyſtem, that the prieſt be invited to become a viſitor, and

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that no book be uſed in the ſchools before it has obtained his approbation, or at leaſt, after his diſſent be notified to the Aſſociation.

There is one meaſure more with reſpect to them which I ſhould rejoice to ſee purſued; it is, that the Aſſociation ſhould addreſs them in the moſt earneſt, pious, and affectionate manner, calling upon them, as they valued the favour of their God, or their own peace and ſecurity, to aſſiſt in the great deſign of reforming the vices of the people; painting in their ſtrongeſt colours the horrors of ignorance and anarchy; pointing out the invariable connection between infidelity and rebellion; tracing the ſteps by which they overthrew their own religion in the example of France. And I do believe we might confidently appeal to their own experience, whether as rebellion waxed ſtrong, irreligion did not grow up with it? whether amongſt the chiefs of diſaffection they did not diſcover the diſciples of infidelity? And if ſo, putting it to their reaſon, whether they could be any thing but the tools of ſuch men, to be caſt off whenever the danger was ſurmounted, and perſecuted with that cruel and fanatic ſpirit of irreligion, to which thouſands of their brethren in France had fallen victims—I would willingly indulge the hope, that ſuch an addreſs might convince the reaſon of ſome, might gratify the feelings of others, and thus all, perhaps, may be induced to countenance an attempt, which none can deny is laudable.

Should this prove nugatory, ſtill much, I think, may be effected, by rendering the premiums given for theſe ſtudies as valuable as poſſible to the parent. If on a Saturday, in winter, he was to receive a ſack of turf, when his child had his catechiſm the beſt, would not this entice him not only to permit, but as far as he could to enforce and promote the ſtudy of it, and thus perhaps acquire ſome little knowledge of it himſelf.

But were even all theſe to be ineffectual, yet would I not deſpair—I would recur with much confidence to the original principle of this eſſay, and rely, that if public opinion could once be brought to bear upon this ſubject, that under its encouragement a ſpirit of exertion and ſuperintendance would be excited amongſt the gentry, and thus the influence of the landlord will be brought forward in aid of your plans, and to beat down the oppoſition from the pride or prejudice of the peaſant. I believe few landlords will ſay, that where they or any part of their families ſhewed a ſtrong intereſt, or paid a zealous attention to any inſtitution, that their tenants ever openly oppoſed them;—that the influence of the higher claſſes is all powerful when openly and zealouſly exerted for any object. I have witneſſed, in many inſtances,—amongſt them the following more immediately intereſted me—A ſchool was eſtabliſhed by a private family in the neighbourhood of Antrim, at an expence of 120l per annum. A very reſpectable diſſenting clergyman was employed as maſter, with a ſalary of forty guineas a year, with an excellent uſher and writing maſter, and the beſt accommodation of every kind provided;—yet the people could not be perſuaded to ſend their children there, as none of the family could find time to attend. For two or three years, therefore, there were not above twenty ſcholars; while an ignorant maſter, who taught in the very next town to it, at rather a high price, had a large ſchool. Happily a lady of the family came down to the country, who devoted much of her time to the ſchool, took an intereſt in the progreſs of the children, and occaſionally viſited the parents—In a very ſhort time the ſchool was filled with 150 ſcholars, moſtly Catholics, and has continued ſo for now near five years;—it has even become a favour to gain

admittance. Its good effects were ſo viſible in the improved manners of the children, and often of the parents, that many gentlemen of the neighbourhood expreſſed a deſire to ſubſcribe, that its beneficial influence might be extended. In truth, I have ſeen and heard of ſo many inſtances, where the country gentleman has acquired an irreſiſtible influence and warm affection, if he or any of his family had appeared truly intereſted in the welfare of their inferiors, and not merely diſplayed an oſtentatious beneficence, that I never can acquieſce in the frequent reproach, that kindneſs is inefficacious with the lower claſſes, and that gratitude is alien to their hearts. I touch with apprehenſion on this delicate ſubject. I know how much riſque I run of irritating the wounded feelings of many;—but this ſentiment is too fatal to all improvement to be left undiſturbed. Where it prevails, it chills every feeling, it palſies every effort.

"Oh! it comes o'er the mind, as doth the raven
O'er the infected houſe, boding to all."

I cannot, therefore, let it paſs unnoticed, conſcious as I am that it ariſes from a partial and precipitate view. I know that numerous inſtances will be brought to ſupport this invective againſt our people. I will admit their truth, and thank my God that my experience has lain amidſt other ſcenes—But had it even been amongſt theſe, ſtill would I have liſtened to accounts of a different caſt, e'er I cloſed my heart for ever againſt my countrymen. I would have anxiouſly ſought for inſtances to re-eſtabliſh confidence, and reſtore to me the only pure ſource of happineſs on earth;—and he that ſeeks ſhall find:—the inſtances abound;—but unfortunately for the character of mankind, their virtues are only ſpoken in the

the ear, while their vices are proclaimed on the houſe tops. This indeed is a natural, though melancholy conſequence, reſulting from the nature of ſociety. It was neceſſary for its preſervation that crimes ſhould be puniſhed: it followed therefore that they muſt be publiſhed; but as it was found impoſſible to reward each virtue, it was thought unneceſſary to record them. Were both however equally noticed, unhappy muſt have been the lot of that man who does not ſay that the catalogue of merits would exceed that of demerits. But granting that crimes predominate, even theſe can be traced to that very ignorance which you are now called on to remedy. Theſe vices then, far from being an apology for inactivity, become a new ſpur to exertion. You muſt diſtinguiſh between actions and their motives, if you would live in friendſhip and eſteem with any claſs of mankind. You muſt not haſtily prononnce that the ſource is poiſoned wherever you find the ſtream impure. Thus is it not palpable that religious bigotry and political deluſion, the fertile ſources of all our crimes and miſeries, ſpring immediately from ignorance rather than from innate depravity? And where theſe groſſer perverſions of mind do not exiſt, yet ingratitude, or what bears its form, often ſprings from the ſame root; for ignorance expoſes the mind to put falſe conſtructions on other's conduct, and by increaſing prejudices in ourſelves, multiplies occaſions of offence. Thus irritations ariſe, and often too in proportion to former favours, which produce coldneſs in the conduct, while the heart may remain kind and charitable.—We admit this reaſoning in the caſe of the higher ranks of ſociety. There the gueſt, who haſtily conſtrues the actions of his hoſt into affronts, who is captious at the playful freedoms of his friend, is branded as an "ignorant creature;" he is accuſed

of wanting knowledge of the world, but never ſuſpected of wanting the common feelings of human nature. Why then ſhould we call this very ſame ſpirit, when it dictates ſimilar actions in the lower claſſes, ingratitude? The cauſe I fear is, that we do not ſympathiſe with our inferiors as we do with our equals; we never enter into their feelings; we call for larger returns of gratitude, where in nature we ſhould expect leſs and, we make no allowance for paſſions and prejudices, where in reaſon they muſt be moſt prevalent. We are unreaſonable, I ſay, in our demands of gratitude for the favours we deign to beſtow; for that very diſparity of rank, which, in our opinion, ſhould heighten their affection, ſerves rather to abate it. As an elegant writer ſays to the higheſt man in ſociety, "the fortune that made you a prince, forbad you to have a friend;" and a ſenſe of duty which ſhould ſupply its place is the fruit of knowledge and reflection, which, alas! it is their peculiar misfortune to want. You have not thought ſufficiently of this; would you then act the truly wiſe and Chriſtian part;—redouble your cares to conciliate and enlighten this unfortunate people—baniſh that indignation which now riſes in your breaſt againſt them—be aſſured that they are more deſerving of your pity—that many of what you call their faults are rather their misfortunes, and theſe too juſtly chargeable on your own head, who left them to wander in darkneſs and in miſery, expoſed to every tempter—Do you feel then the ſpark of benevolence rekindle in your hearts? Does the wiſh ariſe to ſave your wretched countrymen? Would you fan this noble ſpirit into a flame, then turn your view to our ſiſter kingdom, and your heart will glow at the view of innumerable eſtabliſhments by the rich and great, for the relief, and comfort, and inſtruction of the poor. The tenderneſs of a parent

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for the intereſt and improvement of his child, cannot exceed that of the Engliſh gentry for the lowly peaſant. This has been the ſource of that internal peace and ſtability they now enjoy. Who that compares England with other countries, that does not exclaim, Happy nation! Yet let us not envy or repine;—let us look into the character of our own countrymen, they will be found nobly endowed by nature with generoſity, charity, and publie ſpirit. Seldom has any plauſible plan of improvement been propoſed to our gentry, that theſe qualities have been found wanting. That they have not taken the ſame direction, nor been exerted with due vigour, I can attribute to accident, or to ſome prejudices, that I truſt are on the wane. More favourable ſymptoms every day appear. Already does every patriotic, benevolent mind exult in the proſpect of a new ſpirit animating the gentry of Ireland; their energies are awakened, and they feel the neceſſity of bending their thoughts to the amendment of the lower claſſes. Ignorance ſhall yet be baniſhed from our land, and with it ſuperſtition and diſorder; domeſtic peace, confidence, and cordiality, ſhall yet ſmile in our long diſtracted homes.

As to men then, who take delight in ſuch proſpects of human happineſs, and would ſpare no labour to realize them, I ſhall ceaſe to dwell on them. Let me now turn to a ſubject, perhaps of equal importance with that of education; I mean as to the poſſibility of producing ſome *preſent* effects on the general maſs of the people. Indeed I have known an immediate and viſible alteration to be produced in the parents by the improvement of the children. But I allude now to the poſſibility of inſtilling better principles into thoſe who can read, by the diſſemination of little tracts, written in that ſtyle which is moſt familiar to them, and adapted to their habits and ſituation. We always judge too haſtily of the

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operation of ſuch meaſures as theſe. It is by ſlow degrees, and oftentimes imperceptibly, that they work their way; but they ſeldom fail to produce their fruit in due ſeaſon. The misfortune is, that in this kingdom they have ſeldom reached the hands of the populace. Much expence has been incurred for the purchaſe of ſuch pamphlets, but little pains taken for the diſtribution. It is not enough to ſend down a number of them to a magiſtrate to diſtribute *gratis*; this makes them both deſpiſed and ſuſpected—for it is an univerſal maxim with man, to deſpiſe what is acquired without difficulty. The beſt books, if a gift, would engage leſs attention, than the worſt, if obtained by purchaſe. The univerſal ſtandard of excellence is the price. 'Tis not with the vulgar alone this maxim obtains; we ſee it every day actuating every claſs of life. Should it not then be kept in view, in every plan which relates to mankind? Yet hitherto it ſeems to have been too generally unknown or neglected, in all public meaſures and inſtitutions. I have already hinted at it in a former part of my ſcheme—in the preſent inſtance I would apply it thus:—let a moderate price be fixed on theſe tracts, and then, in order to get purchaſers, give them into the hands of thoſe who are beſt verſed in the arts of recommending their wares to ſale—to the hawkers and ballad ſingers; they ſhould be furniſhed to them at two-thirds of the price, and then to ſtimulate them to extraordinary exertions, and to the practice of every art, by which the people may be enticed to purchaſe them, let the whole of the price be returned upon as many, as they ſhall prove by certificate of the magiſtrate or clergyman, were diſpoſed of amongſt the cottagers of the neighbourhood. If ſmall premiums could be afforded to thoſe who had ſold the greateſt number, it would much increaſe the effect.

Thus

Thus too would theſe tracts eſcape the ſuſpicion which reſts on them, when they come directly from the higher orders; a ſuſpicion which is ſomewhat confirmed by their ſtyle and manner, which (I ſpeak with all that deference which is due to the ſuperior talents and virtues of their authors and encouragers) ſeems to me ſomewhat exceptionable, as being too palpably and excluſively addreſſed to the lower claſſes alone. The peaſant then ſuppoſes them to be dictated by the intereſt of the ſuperior, rather than by the love of truth or religion—for then they would reprove vice equally in every claſs; but now every ſquire is made a ſaint, which his experience does not warrant, and which provokes unfavourable compariſons. Such a tract as Reform or Ruin affords a good model, whoſe equivocal title induced many to read it, and whoſe impartial reproof, and lively repreſentations of the faults of all deſcriptions of men, brought home conviction of its truth and ſincerity to every breaſt. But ſtill we want a peculiarity of ſtyle, without which ſuch hiſtories will never bear the ſemblance of reality, or catch the attention and favour of the reader. Vernacular idioms, local circumſtances, popular maxims and phraſes, will, in ſpite of their prejudices, force their attention and approbation. One little tract, which is exquiſite in its way, under the title of the Dying Confeſſion of Martin M'Gloughlin, will exemplify, and indeed, I think, enforce my ideas on the ſubject.

As to the matter of ſuch tracts, I will only ſuggeſt a few ſubjects, which, I think, ſhould be treated of. One is to recommend education to parents, by intereſting ſtories, of its advantages to them as well as to their children. Another is—little treatiſes on agriculture, ſhort and ſimple, claſſing the different ſoils, and ſhewing the marks of each—the ſucceſſion of crops beſt adapted to each, with their appropriate

manners

manures—the eaſieſt mode of forming their dunghill, and of hedging and fencing their fields, &c.; theſe ſubjects, if once engaging their attention, might call them off from the dangerous ſtudy of modern politics. I have no doubt of their producing the beſt effects on the people of the North. Various topics will ſuggeſt themſelves according to the variety of genius; for be aſſured, that if once the Aſſociation ſeem animated with becoming zeal, and this directed in a uſeful channel, much talent, which now lies dormant, or is waſted in frivolous or dangerous purſuits, will come forward in its ſervice. Indeed when I look into the catalogue of our members, I feel my mind glow with the moſt ardent hopes of ſucceſs, from the aſſociates engaged in this great cauſe. Great as are the exertions which ſuch a plan requires, they juſtify my confidence, that ſuch exertions will be made. I ſhould be ſorry, indeed, to think that I had waſted your time in ſtating improbabilities, or building caſtles in the air, however ſpecious they might be; but is it improbable or unreaſonable to expect, that this Aſſociation will evince as much zeal, and patriotiſm, and religion, as the Agricultural Board? Let us take a nearer view, however, of thoſe claſſes whoſe exertions are here called for; it will, I think, encourage every man who joins with me on the practicability of theſe plans, to engage in them with the aſſurance of moſt ſtrenuous and worthy ſupport.

It is manifeſt, that the ſucceſs of this ſyſtem will depend much on the countenance and exertions of the prelacy. Can you doubt of their ſtrenuous ſupport? Have not many of them in their literary labours given ſuch teſtimony of zeal, of piety, of induſtry, which will ſurely not lie dormant in a cauſe which tends to the glory of God, and the ſalvation of millions? Does not this Aſſociation atteſt their zeal for religion and ſocial happineſs? What other

motives

motives could urge them to be the founders and ſupporters of this inſtitution? Will minds then capable of conceiving and effectuating ſuch an eſtabliſhment as this,—will they ſlumber over ſuch a work? will they expoſe themſelves to the reproach which ſhould light only on little minds? "Tantam rem tam negligenter."—Still further, follow them into their dioceſe, and obſerve their laudable exertions to infuſe a new ſpirit into ſuch of their clergy as are forgetful of their high calling,—to oblige them to reſidence—to connect and attach them as paſtors to their flocks.—Will theſe men now neglect ſo fair an occaſion, of engaging the miniſter to take an active part in the concerns of his pariſh, by giving him a delightful and animating object of purſuit?—Will they not rejoice in the opportunity of holding them forth in the moſt amiable character of the paſtoral office;—in teaching the young idea how to ſhoot;—in preparing thoſe fruits which ſhall reſtore health to their miſerable country, and be an acceptable ſacrifice to their God, when at the awful day of reckoning each man ſhall give an account of his miniſtry. Nay more, in this very branch of duty, education, we have many delightful inſtances of epiſcopal zeal.—Some of our prelates have taken extreme pains to tranſlate and diſtribute the moral tracts of popiſh writers, in hopes of thus prevailing on the people to receive them;—ſome of them have founded private ſchools. Such men will aſſuredly beſtow, with chearfulneſs, a few hours once a fortnight, to inſpect the reports of the clergy from every pariſh, who, thus aſſured of the vigilant ſuperintendance of their ſuperiors, and of the public at large, will unqueſtionably be rouſed to exertion. From the clergy, indeed, new and arduous exertions will be required; yet I reſt in full aſſurance that their parts will be worthily filled.—I appeal to every candid, liberal mind, whether the lar-

ger portion of the clerical body has not, in our times, evinced a ſpirit, from which we may expect the moſt energetic and judicious ſupport of every meaſure which promiſes ſuch fruits—They ſeem at length to have awakened to a ſenſe of the vaſt importance they are of in the ſocial ſyſtem; and they feel the high duties which are in conſequence thus impoſed on them. Long and loud experience has convinced mankind, that ſociety is upheld by religion;—that religion is now languiſhing and waſting away, is a melancholy truth that reſounds from every quarter. The true philoſopher deplores it in his cloſet;—the man of buſineſs feels it in his daily commerce. Who can revive and re-eſtabliſh it, but a pious, active, enlightened clergy?—To them ſociety ſtretches forth its arms, and demands peace and ſecurity, and happineſs at their hands.—What then I moſt earneſtly contend for, as more incontrovertibly true, as more highly important than any thing I have mentioned, is this, that the clergy, acting thus in concert, under the enlightened direction and encouragement of their ſuperiors,—the whole maſs impregnated with the ſame ſpirit, which, when thus linked together, would paſs with electric velocity through the circle—that the clergy, thus animated, and thus conducted, would perform wonders;—and that they are willing thus to act, I conclude from the ſeparate efforts which many of them have made,—in which they have been often baffled by the obſtacles that the general ignorance threw in their way. Men, who like theſe, were anxious to diſcharge all the duties of their functions, we may be aſſured will embrace, with ardour, every propoſal which promiſes to give ſucceſs to their labours, by removing the grand obſtacle which hitherto rendered them fruitleſs, and which, at all events, muſt be attended with this ineſtimable advantage, that it opens the way to an improved intercourſe

courſe with their flock. No matter what the religion or politicks of the parents, you then approach them through the tendereſt of human ties; you gain an entrance into their hearts, by aſſociating yourſelf with their darling care, the welfare of their child. By being frequent in your attendance on the ſchools, you will obſerve the beſt informed and the beſt behaved amongſt the ſcholars;—you will, if you pleaſe, have the diſtribution of the premiums. What a recommendation will this be to the good graces of the parents, when afterwards you call on them to ſpeak the praiſes of their child, and bring them ſome of the fruits of his improvement.—When but one friend is thus acquired amongſt your pariſhioners, it will facilitate a favourable introduction to the reſt; and who but will admit that ſuch an intercourſe, which promotes reſpect and tenderneſs for the miniſter of religion, would, if general, effect a greater moral reform, than folios of laws, or ages of the ordinary education; and 'tis thus alone that true religion can ſpread and flouriſh.—Such paſtors, in the midſt of the people, are ſuch bright examples of the truth, that none can miſtake the path;—they are ſhining lights, which muſt in time diſpel the miſts of ſuperſtition.

Were it neceſſary, indeed, to ſtimulate our clergy, I would point to the example of the Scotch clergy, who at the call of an individual, Sir J. Sinclair, requeſting their aid in furniſhing materials for a ſtatiſtical account of Scotland, came forward with a degree of zeal and induſtry, and diſplayed ſuch an enlightened and patriotic ſpirit, as reflects on them the higheſt honour, and claims the warmeſt gratitude from their country. The reports which he received from the pariſhes were filled with ſuch ample and judicious information, and ſo elegantly written, that it was thought impoſſible to improve them; and they were therefore publiſhed in their original ſtate. But here it is

not an individual merely, but your country calls on you, on the moſt important and awful ſubject, wherein the preſent and eternal intereſts of your fellow creatures are at ſtake, and where you alone can ſave them.—I know full well that you will not be deaf to ſuch a call, where honour, intereſt, duty, all unite.—I know that you will never expoſe your country and your holy function to the ſcandal which ſuch deſertion would bring upon them.—What humiliating compariſons would be drawn ſhould you now refuſe your aid. Might it not become a reproach to be an Iriſh clergyman?—No, never will you degrade your country and your profeſſion ſo low in the eſtimation of mankind.

Amongſt the other members of this Aſſociation, I reckon many diſtinguiſhed by their public ſpirit,—illuſtrious for their patriotic and enlightened meaſures in behalf of their country, whoſe wealth and power have thriven beneath their care. I build with confidence on their ſupport, whenever it can be effectual towards accompliſhing the important ends here propoſed. Tis not for minds enlarged as theirs, to neglect the greater good, while they beſtow ſuch pains upon the leſs; to be anxious only for the mercenary intereſts of their countrymen; careleſs as to the improvement of their rational and moral character;—ſuch policy is abſurd and ignoble.—It is well expoſed in the ſtory of the old gentleman, who, when deliberating in what way he ſhould apply the fortune of his ſon to beſt advantage, was adviſed to expend the whole of it in reclaiming a moor, which might be cultivated ſo far as to produce potatoes; to which he indignantly replied, "What! and bring up my ſon a hog to eat them."

Another principal ſource of encouragement and aſſiſtance yet remains:—the many ſchools eſtabliſhed by private families and ſocieties, and upheld by their

their care alone. I neither know all the inſtances, nor if I did, could I determine which to ſelect. There is one, however, immediately under our eyes, and attended with circumſtances, expreſſive of ſuch noble and generous ſpirit, that I muſt mention it;—it is St. Catharine's School, eſtabliſhed principally by the Quakers; who ſubſcribed a very large ſum for the inſtruction of children of all religious perſuaſions; and, as a proof of that earneſt and manly zeal, which ſhould characterize the true friends of mankind, though the rebellion broke out the very day the building was begun, it was finiſhed before peace was reſtored. Indeed, it is with pleaſure I call your attention to this highly meritorious ſect of men, from whoſe judicious zeal and induſtrious exertions, in every part of the kingdom, we may expect the moſt powerful ſupport, and large ſtores of uſeful information.—It will, therefore, be a principal care of the Aſſociation, to engage the favour and the co-operation of this honeſt and charitable ſect.

Many ſuch eſtabliſhments exiſt throughout this kingdom, and ſuch facts ſhould be more known; they are an honour to human nature. Through this committee they will be made public, and through them they will be applauded. The effects of this, in producing ſimilar exertions, I have already ſhewn; and the aid and encouragement which will be thus given to thoſe who wiſh to form new inſtitutions of the ſame kind, by the information derived from the moſt ſucceſsful of thoſe experiments, will ſmooth the way for numbers.

Large funds will be required to effectuate theſe plans;—but Parliament has evinced ſuch anxious deſire to forward the great buſineſs of education, that I confide in its liberal ſupport. If the Aſſociation can preſent a plan that is practicable, I have much miſconſtrued the ſpirit of our government, if it

it be ſuffered to fail for want of the ampleſt ſupplies. We have ſeen enough of the generous ſpirit of the nation, to encourage us to hope that a public ſubſcription, opened and recommended by the Aſſociation, would ſoon create a very ſplendid fund. The metropolis alone, when we conſider its great, its unexampled charities, promiſes abundant contributions. The maſs of the gentry would delight in the eſtabliſhment of ſeminaries, from which honeſt, induſtrious, and well informed ſervants and tenants might afterwards be procured. This ſubſcription too, if introduced with the plan annexed, and accompanied with a ſuitable addreſs to all claſſes, would rouſe the public attention to the ſubject, and ſpread the ſpirit of exertion through the nation.

But I have already ſaid too much, when I conſider how it has been ſaid.—In judging of this haſty, feeble attempt, I only requeſt that you conſider my object:—it is but to raiſe a train of thought in other minds. I feel conviction is rooted in my mind, that upon the progreſs of education depends our peace, our proſperity, our ſocial happineſs—I am eager, I am impatient, therefore, till my zealous, enlightened, and truly Chriſtian brethren of the Aſſociation, lay the ſubject to their hearts;—till they feel, as I do, that however clumſily and obſcurely the idea be here developed, ſtill there is ſomething at the bottom which deſerves to ſee the light;—that ſomething muſt be done, and that this experiment is worthy of trial, as being attended with no danger, and with little trouble—for the trouble muſt ariſe, and always grow in exact proportion to the ſucceſs;—and if it ſucceeds,—Oh! that I could do juſtice to the emotions which the thought excites in my breaſt—then, indeed, would I kindle "a flame of holy vehemence," before which every obſtacle would melt away,—which would infuſe an energy that would command ſucceſs.

But

But may you, my reader, whom heaven hath endowed with talents and with knowledge, when you contemplate this important ſubject, pregnant with the happineſs or miſery of your country, (may you feel grieved that a hand ſo feeble ſhould alone venture to ſuſtain a cauſe ſo noble—) ſnatch it from a weak but zealous champion, protect and cheriſh it with the might and ſplendor of genius.—The richeſt recompenſe awaits the deed: a nation ſaved, a people bleſſed.—For this you ſhall receive the grateful plaudits of mankind. Are you a Chriſtian—for this you ſhall receive the favour and the reward of your God.

FINIS.